

MRS Central Meeting  
Rowan Public Library  
January 24, 2006

Counties Present: Union, Greensboro, Rockingham, Person, Mecklenburg, Forsyth, Rowan, Stokes, Alamance.

Introductions

Updates from Raleigh

Training

Data talked about MRS2 and training for new counties

Intake/Screening

What cases are sent to Investigation track and why

Your questions

Training

Cornerstone A vs B

- If workers will be doing family assessments need to go to Cornerstone A. What about people do occasional on call? Holly says use your best judgment how occasional is occasional? The two trainings are the same for the first two days, but the scenarios that they train with are different for A and B.

NSCU Facilitator Opportunity

- Facilitation Support Program the same people that will help you with your facilitation (at no charge) have a Facilitation Support Program. It will need quarterly and talk about facilitation issues.

Policy Trainings

- Will have about 3 more policy training 3 in March, 3 in May (3/8 the only one set up as of yet) One in Burke, Cumberland. When she has finalized the dates, Holly will send them out on the email list.

Data

MRS2

- For the new counties, MRS2 will start on February 2. Did not make sense to roll out less than a month before the changes to the central registry.
- Please check the email for instructions as to how to use MRS2. Differences are significant for easing data entry (i.e. common edit where you can enter multiple children) so using it should be easy.

New counties

- New counties will not be responsible for entering until they have gone to the training and are doing family assessments.
- Asked all new counties to put someone on the email list and indicate if they felt they were ready for the training.

How do you handle when you switch tracks? Do you have to do a whole new intake?

- No. Union created a form that lists why they switched and they put it in the file. (Freddy will email the form to Holly.) Someone wants to see a case plan that was done during a CFT so if anyone has one that they can send Holly. She is not sure exactly how these will be different because you have to use the same form.

Are there any cases that are always going to be forensic/investigative?

- Mecklenburg as a result of demand from the community they have taken any case that is neglect that had any sexual activity context as forensic because the risk of the child doing other child on child sex abuse was a victim of abuse themselves. (Or other kinds of sexual like Uncle abusing). Have talked about domestic violence but have not decided to do all them as forensic no matter what. Don't want to revictimize the DV abuse victim.
- Union go by policy no others always forensic
- Guilford go by policy. Most DV is family but if there is a weapon they will go forensic.
- Alamance look at the history of services in the county. If there is a history of reports and services more likely to go forensic. (Ends of being about one case every 3 weeks,) Look at past records, the allegation, the finding, the services, provided, and the reasons the case was closed.
- Rowan thinking of going with the state standards to begin with
- Forsyth have not decided if they will automatically assign any forensic other than the state standards
- Person will probably look at the history of the family.
- Mecklenburg schools call in and request that the investigation be forensic. They look at the individual situation. Usually they can't give them any legitimate reason for doing it forensically so they don't.
- Alamance has other reporters than the schools that want then to do if forensically.

What kinds of things would make you take a neglect case forensic?

- The history and/or severity. If they are already in case mgmt Guilford does it forensic. (Guilford has different case managers and investigators.) Union thinks that the case managers should be doing the investigations on families that they are already working with in case management.

Forsyth switched to blended teams yesterday. Each has 3 CPS investigators, a Foster Care worker and a supervisor. They are wondering what has worked best for handling forensic cases because right now the CPS investigators could get any kind of case, family assessment, forensic assessment, or case management.

- Mecklenburg has not blended yet but has made a conscious decision to keep investigative separate. Those are the cases that tend to be high profile and need lot of other collaboratives (hospitals, police) that you need

to develop and maintain a relationship with and need a set of specialized skills that may not stay sharp if you don't use them regularly.

- Person very small county so only have one CPS unit. Have SW who have been identified as trained to do forensic but have some assessors that have not been trained to do forensic.
- Holly has found that generally bigger counties are more likely to have dedicated forensic workers because there are enough forensic cases to keep them busy.

Holly asked how people take cases of drug exposed infants?

- Everyone said family assessments. Holly says that Watauga has done it this way and it has worked great. They have a wonderful relationship with their substance use partners because of all the meth problems they were having there.

Holly's suggestion is that if you are going to blend teams and functions do one at a time or you will overload and fail.

How does the process of collaboration b/w Work First and Child Welfare go?

- Person CPS intake sends email to WF workers to find out if they are getting services. If they are, then they tell CPS what kinds of services. They don't necessarily attend CFTs.
- Mecklenburg Have made WF a mandatory collateral. Do a data match each quarter of CPS and WF cases to match up. At this time their intentions are good but they are not quite where they need to be.
- Alamance make checking mandatory with WF, food stamps, etc. Invite WF to CFTs and staffing. If CPS workers are going out to the family they send an email out of everyone that has services with the family to see if they have anything that they need signed and the CPS worker can take the forms out with them which helps the other service folks. (Don't do this on the first couple of visits, but after there is already a relationship.) If there is a WF person at staffing then they staff that one first so that they can leave.
- Union mandatory collateral and CFTs they are invited, but not mandatory.
- Guilford have developed protocols for other services including Work First. WF comes to CFT, and working on having CPS going to Success meetings. They do team staffing and WF is invited to the case decision.

How do WF supervisors feel about this? Do they have time to go to CFTs.

- The WF supervisor here had just started doing this but she thinks it will help.
- Although some of them (CFTs) are long but they do get some useful information out of it.

How many are carrying services recommended cases?

- Person yes, code 395
- Mecklenburg yes
- Alamance no but send them a closing letter what services that they received. Sometimes the family wants more services, but if there is no CPS issue, they have to close it.
- Union exact same procedure as Alamance.

What is the criteria for physical abuse vs discipline? How do you determine at the point of intake?

- Guilford depends on the circumstances, age of child, severity of injury
- Person use the screening tool and their own professional judgment - have to take it on a case by case basis.
- Forsyth has had some hard and fast rules but they would like to revisit those because they feel that they are spending too much time on these and many of them may really be discipline cases
- Alamance risk of substantial abuse to vital organs. (Bruise on buttocks may be discipline but near kidneys may be abuse.)
- Union same as Alamance
- Rockingham use of weapon = abuse
- Stokes same as what others have mentioned
- Note that you can take inappropriate discipline cases (immediate response) as family assessments. Union likes it because it gives an immediate opportunity to meet with parents and find out if there are other issues or get them involved.
- Rowan has a lot of community protocols that are to a higher standards. One of them is that if there is a mark at all, then law enforcement goes out with them. This will be a challenge to handle in a family assessment approach.

How do you handle the collaterals with intake? Do you tell reporters that any collaterals will be revealed to the parents?

- Yes. This causes some reporters to stop giving collaterals.

Are any of us finding that their workers know that something is going on but collaterals won't share for fear of being revealed to families?

- Current MRS counties have said no. Guilford pointed out that you have the option to not reveal the collaterals to the parents if there is a reason not to. (This does not apply to professionals who have to be revealed, but if those folks have an issue with the family, they should be able to discuss their issues with the family members anyway.)
- Guilford also said that if you are consistent and do not change the decisions that are made at the meetings. This prevents the collaterals from sitting there and not saying anything and then telling the SW all their concerns afterward. If they realize you will not change their decision and if they want to be heard they have to speak during the meeting, they will

Speak up. This will require some coaching before the CFT so that the collateral can share without it sounding like a judgment.

- Union had question about when the school is the reporter anonymously. The schools didn't like family assessment and so they are reporting anonymously although we know it's them. Still can't reveal the reporter if they want to be anonymous, but if the counselor reports and didn't give her name but gave the teachers as collaterals then those teachers are not protected.

Is it fair that the reporter can be anonymous but they can provide names of collaterals who can't be anonymous? Those collaterals may not have a clue.

How intake process works? How much do the intake workers do?

- Union had to firm up and force them to use the tool because they thought it took too long. But you want as much information as you can up front. The report is staffed with the intake supervisor to see if it is family or forensic. Then it goes to the supervisors who decide which SW gets it.
- Rockingham Intake worker takes report, if not screened out, they do the central registry check and sometimes the check with work first and the criminal check. Pulls the old file if there is one.
- Stokes no actual intake worker, they all rotate. Whoever takes the report is supposed to do the background checks, but if they don't it is up to the worker who gets the case.
- Forsyth Intake does the background checks, tells what kind of case they think it is (may be discussion or disagreement).
- Mecklenburg pretty similar to others, Intake does a preliminary recommendation as to how to assign.
- Person mostly the same as mentioned above

When you have false allegations how much do you have to do before you can stop?

- You still have to fill out the strengths and needs. Why? Because the family assessment is a global assessment, not an incident. So you are not checking for the one thing that was reported, you are checking for the global issues. If you can complete the forms and say that the report is simply untrue you do not have to call collaterals. If it is incorrect but it was in good faith, you need to call the collaterals.

How are they handling child on child sexual reports?

- We talked about this issue at all 3 meetings a few months ago. Large majority of counties wanted to take a case by case basis.
- Mecklenburg's litmus test is a protective response from the parent once they were aware did they respond in a way that would prevent the incident from happening again? It's neglect, improper supervision, but it is taken as a forensic assessment.

If a county asks you to assist them with a case you have to follow the same path (forensic or family) the home county has. You can still use family friendly techniques with forensic investigations.